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**"Love in the Wilds"**

—OR—  
**The Romance of a South African Trading Station.**

CHAPTER LVII.  
**"THE TIME HAS COME!"**

"No, he would be the last to write for fear of its being traced to him. Besides, he feels himself secure, depend upon it."

Sir Charles shook his head.

"If you can't find it out, Rebecca, how do you expect me, who am not half so clever?"

Then Rebecca placed the second note before him.

Sir Charles read it and, much to her astonishment, sprang to his feet with a flush of delight.

"What?" asked Rebecca.

"By Jove, this fellow's a brick who ever he is! He's got it! He's set me something to do. You can't think, Rebecca," he said, dropping into the seat again, "what a worry it has been to me to sit with my hands before me doing nothing—I should like to have gone in for Dartmouth and wrung it out of him. But you said that was quite out of the question. Now there's some work for me. Give me a spade and a pickaxe, and I'll have that well out in half a dozen hours. Bravo! the fellow's hit it, whoever he is!"

Rebecca colored with pleasure, then laid her hand upon his arm timidly and turned pale.

"You are a good fellow, Charlie," she said, "and I am grateful. But we must go to work cautiously still. You think this anonymous adviser is a friend, and so do I. You think, too, that he is giving us good advice, and so, too, do I. But we must be very cautious, remembering with whom we have to deal. Charlie, if you want

down this minute with spade and pickaxe and discovered what there may be discovered in that well, went down alone and without witnesses, we should—or, rather, poor Hugh or Grace would—benefit nothing."

"Why not?" asked Sir Charles, rather afraid of this chance of his being balked.

Rebecca smiled sadly.

"Do you not guess what Reginald Dartmouth would say if we found what we expect—Sir Harry Darrell's genuine will? He would turn around and say that we had manufactured the will and put it there ourselves."

"By Jove!" breathed Sir Charles. "You are right, Rebecca! But what a clever girl you are! Of course he would. But surely you don't mean to let the chance slip? You'll let me clear the well out somehow or other?"

"Yes," said Rebecca, "and soon. What we must do is to consult Mr. Reeves, the old lawyer, and get him to stand by with the doctor, or any other influential person, while the well is cleared, and then what we find can be attested as genuine and without suspicion."

"That's it!" said Sir Charles, springing up and pacing to and fro in the little arbor, with his eyes flashing eagerly—"that's it, Rebecca; and for Heaven's sake don't let us delay!"

Rebecca held up her face—very pale, but very firm it was.

"We will not," she said. "The time has come!"

CHAPTER LVIII.  
**THE INVALID.**

I have scanted all wherein I should your great deserts repay.—SHAKESPEARE.

The task Mr. Tovey and his partner had undertaken was not a very light one. It had its responsibilities, and Joe Wiley was fully sensible of them. It is not every wind that brings young gentlemen willing to pay liberally in good Bank of England notes for the safe-keeping of their brothers, and the dockman was determined to keep a very careful lookout that his valuable lodger did not elude his grasp. Consequently whenever he had a spare moment—and he managed to snatch several from his day's work—he trod up the stairs very carefully and quietly, and on tiptoe stole a glance at the comfortable bed upon which Hugh Darrell—for we may as well give him his right name now—was lying.

The old lady, not forgetful of her promise to the liberal, kind-spoken young gentleman, really spent most of her time and devoted her principal energies to the nursing of the invalid, so that, taking into consideration the extraordinary attention on the part of the doctor—extracted by a double fee—the daily supply of jellies, grapes, and like luxuries, delivered punctually at ten o'clock, it was not marvelous that the strong, huge-limbed Hugh gained strength sufficiently to enable him to go through the usual convalescent performance—ask questions.

First he raised himself on one elbow, next looked round the room with that slow, half-dreamy look one wears at such a moment of reawakening, and



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then fixing his deep, brown eyes upon the lady, said, with an evident effort at recalling late events:

"How long have I been lying here?"

"Oh, not very long, sir," replied the lady, with a slight courtesy, thinking it best, as her kind generally do, to answer an invalid's question with an evasion.

"Not very long?" he repeated, sinking back. "It seems ages."

"Do it, sir, now? Well, I dare say it do seem long to be lying quiet and still-like. Can I get you anything, sir?"

"No," he said, in that grave, purged voice that had gone far to corroborate his "brother's" story in the old lady's opinion. "No, I thank you, excepting it be a little water."

"I mustn't give you that," the doctor's forbidding; but here are some grapes that will quench your thirst quite as well, sir," and she held him a few grapes upon a plate.

He raised his eyes and looked at them rather inquiringly.

"Grapes?" he said. "Grapes must be half a crown a pound. I am afraid you have been hastening my recovery at some expense," and his handsome face overshadowed.

"No—that is—I mean—" stammered the old lady, who had been severely instructed to hold her tongue and answer no questions. "I mean that Joe and Tovey will see to all that."

"Joe and Tovey?" repeated Hugh, looking puzzled. "May I ask where I am? Wherever I am, I am in kind, Christian hands, I know, for which I am grateful; ay, and have been even while I have been unable to say so."

There was a touching dignity with which he laid his hand, lithe and strong still, but rather white and thin, upon the old lady's wrinkled one.

"Don't you go to speak of it, sir; don't, if you please," she replied, laconically. "We've done no more than we should—leastways, more than we were told."

"Told?" he repeated, looking puzzled again. "Who told you?"

What muddle the old lady would have become involved in is not to be known, for at that moment Joe Wiley looked in during one of his spare moments and hearing the invalid's voice stepped into the room and took of his cap.

"Good-morning, sir. I hope I see you better."

"I am much better," said Hugh; "thanks to the careful nursing I have received from this good soul, and, maybe, others. I was just asking her where I was, and to whom I am indebted for all this," and, with a look of gratitude and grave bewilderment, he glanced at the bottles of wine, plates of cake, jellies, fruit, etc.

"This is the docks, sir," replied Mr. Wiley, glibly, for he had been preparing for the scene and had got his part well out and dried: "the docks, sir, where the 'Sclavonia' came in."

"Ay, I remember," said Hugh, sadly. "There were no lives lost, some one told me?"

"No, sir, not a single one, thanks to you and a few other brave men. All hands saved—men, women, and children."

"Thank Heaven!" murmured Hugh, quietly.

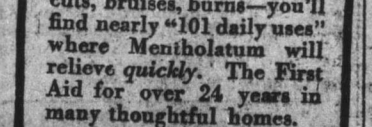
"Amen," responded Mr. Wiley, devoutly.

"And this is the docks?" said Hugh, looking round curiously. "Please tell me, if you will; I am rather weak still, I find, and—"

"Talking come difficult. Just so!" put in Mr. Wiley. "Yes, sir, this is the docks. This is my mate, Tovey's cottage, inside the gates. This is Mrs.



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Tovey. "I'm Joe Wiley, checking clerk."

Hugh nodded with grave impatience.

"We found you quite knocked out aboard the 'Sclavonia.' There was a good deal of fuss going on, and seeing as you were what might be termed 'eyes-on-like,' my mate, Tovey, and me just brought you in here to rest and get round a bit. And you did; only for a bit, though. You'd been playin' the brick sir, if I may make so bold as to say so, for rather a longish spell, and half-short rations for a fortnight is calculated to take the backbone out of a man. You was completely knocked out."

Mr. Wiley, partly to gain time, partly to give full force to his description, divided and emphasized the words and shook his head.

"You just come to enough to ask me to keep the news paper men away from you, and then gave in. We did as we should like to be done by—we brought you up here, and when the newspaper came round, sayin' as they wanted the hero o' the 'Sclavonia' as had starved himself for the sake of the women and children, me and Tovey looked innocent and said that you'd gone away—drawed your money and left the docks."

"Thanks," murmured Hugh, fervently, with a sigh of relief.

He would rather have starved outright than be fussed over and paraded in the daily paper, ticketed for life as the "hero" of the "Sclavonia."

"Don't mention it, sir, don't mention it," resumed Mr. Wiley, with praiseworthy benevolence. "As I was a-sayin', we brought you up here and sent for a doctor. He said as you were suffering from an attack of—of—Do you happen to remember, Mrs. Tovey; what did he say it was the gentleman had?"

Mrs. Tovey shook her head regretfully, but decisively.

"Well, it was a word with five or six syllables and ended with 's,' I know, brought on, he said, by the privation and all that. You was to be kept very quiet, and not allowed to get up—even when you wanted to—not until you were quite strong. That's right, ain't it, Mrs. Tovey?"

"Yes, he did, sir; he did, indeed," assented the old lady.

"And," continued Mr. Wiley, "you was to have everything as was very nourishin' and strengthenin', such as—"

"Casting his eyes round the various delicacies upon the table and scanning them with slow unctuousness—such as sherry wine with water, grapes, rice-cake, chicken and ham, beef-tea, jellies, and broth."

Hugh, with a trouble look, stopped him.

"My good fellow, I am very grateful, more grateful than I can possibly tell you; but all these cost money. You must not think that I am a rich man. I am only a plain sailor, and quite unable to pay for all these luxuries," and he raised himself upon his elbow with a groan of vexation.

(To be continued.)

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